

Soil & Water News

Schoharie County

January 2013

It's Time...



Orders for low-cost bare root seedlings and transplants for planting in the spring are being taken now. It's the perfect time to look at issues like windbreaks – you might be able to get a tree (or group of trees) to help you shovel less or maybe slow down the wind. Perhaps your home was too hot this past August, maybe a perfectly placed shade tree is really what you need. Whatever the reason, now is the time to plan for your spring plantings. The Soil and Water Conservation District has many varieties of trees and shrubs that are

just right for our area, and affordably priced. All of the trees and shrubs offered by the District make great conservation enhancements to your landscape, helping to promote soil protection and wildlife habitat.

The trees and shrubs offered have all been identified as species that will do well in our area. Please pay close attention to the descriptions on the back of the order form. There you'll find specific site requirements of each species. The descriptions will also give you an idea as to how tall a tree can reach at maturity.

Here's a more in-depth explanation to help you understand some of the information on the order form. Age: you'll see that the age column consists of two numbers separated by a dash. The first number represents the number of years the plant spent in the seedling bed and the second number represents the number of years the plant spent in the transplant bed, so a 2-2 tree is 4 years old, spending 2 years in each bed. Seedlings, of course will only have a number in the first and a 0 in the second be-

cause they have not been transplanted. The size indicates the approximate height of the tree or shrub. Generally transplants will not necessarily be taller, but they will have a more developed root system and girth (diameter) to the trunk of the tree. We sell seedlings starting in quantities of 25 and transplants and hardwoods start in quantities of 10. Groundcover, berries and homeowner packs are all sold in different quantities, so check the order form carefully. We know that our prices will seem low, and every year we receive calls to ask if the price is per plant or for 10 plants. **Yes**, that is the price for the total quantity listed.

With that said, The time to order is Now!

"I speak for the trees, for the trees have no tongues." -Dr. Seuss

SWCD Assists County with Local Share of Federal Funding

As Hurricane Irene ravaged the Schoharie Valley, local agencies had to take a triage approach to getting water moving in the right direction during and after the flood. Miles of roads were washed away, bridges were filled with downed trees and gravel, or destroyed completely, and many streams changed direction putting infrastructure at risk during future flooding events. Some streams were in such a bad condition if left on their own they would not heal for many years if at all. Recognizing this need the Soil and Water District along with partners from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) began to inventory stream damage in the weeks and months following the storms. Efforts by local leaders including Congressman Paul Tonko led to federal funding being released by Congress to fund the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program. This opened up a funding vehicle for municipalities to take advantage of for stream mitigation projects not covered by FEMA Funding. Shortly after announcement of this funding NRCS staff assessed many streams at the request of SWCD and local municipalities. Although not all the sites assessed qualified for funding, several did qualify since they demonstrated an imminent threat to life, safety, and public property. This led to a potential for millions of dollars in Federal money being devoted to Schoharie County Streams for restoration and protection of its residents. Unfortunately, like most Federal Grants, the EWP Program requires a local non-federal match be provided by the local sponsor (in this case the County). This made the county responsible for millions of dollars in matching funds in order for the projects to move forward. In a hope to lessen the burden to already financially strapped communities the Soil and Water Conservation District began a search for possible State Grants that



Section of the Platterkill in Gilboa which is part of a one mile restoration project which will be funded by the EWP Program this year

might assist the County in finding the funding for this effort. The SWCD had heard news of a newly released Hurricane Irene/ Tropical Storm Lee Flood Mitigation Grant being offered by the Empire State Development Corporation and administered by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. This grant would make available \$500,000 for EWP cost share to eligible sponsors. Although this would not be enough to cover all the cost share requirements needed, the District felt that applying and including all the EWP projects in the application would demonstrate the counties extensive need for additional funding. This application combined with unending support by local leaders including Senator James Seward, Assemblyman Peter Lopez, and the County Board of Supervisors led to the Empire State Development Corporation not only awarding the maximum to the county, but increasing the award to cover all the counties local matching requirements. SWCD's Stream Program Manager Pete Nichols remarked; "This funding allows us to use a proven scientific method to repair what we lost to last year's flooding, while protecting streamside residents and millions of dollars in public infrastructure". An engineering firm has been selected to begin survey, assessment, and design this winter with construction planned to commence in the summer of 2013.

Soil and Water Conservation District Assists County with Local Share Towards Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Funding

National Emergency Grant (NEG) Proves Successful

Hurricane Irene struck Schoharie County in August of 2011 followed closely by Tropical Storm Lee. Both storms resulted in unprecedented flooding throughout the Schoharie Valley. One of the issues that became evident in the weeks and months after flood waters receded was the enormous amounts of downed trees, and flood debris that remained scattered throughout the county. Without a funding mechanism for removing these materials, many landowners were hard pressed for a solution. Word that the Department of Labor (DOL) was offering grants monies to help address this unmet need was praised by Schoharie County Officials. Representatives from Schoharie County Planning and Economic Development were tasked with preparing a grant application to DOL. Once the grant was awarded the Schoharie County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) was tasked with administering the grant. This involved interviewing over 100 applicants to fill Supervisory, Foreman, Safety Officer, Administrative, and Laborer positions in a relatively short period of time. Crews once hired were broken down into six teams, and provided with OSHA Safety training in first aid, chain saw, and several other disciplines before being allowed to commence with the clean-up activities. Prior to project execution landowner applications and access agreements were circulated to all Town Clerks, and the program was advertised in several newspapers, and local radio shows. Over 100 landowners took advantage of the free service which provided removal of floatable debris that not only was aesthetically offensive, but could have caused a safety issue if they were to become re-suspended during a future flood. Many landowners who received this service were very appreciative, and the temporary workers were glad for the opportunity to provide the service to the community. All

of the workers hired were either displaced from their jobs by the flooding or considered long term unemployed by DOL. They received useful training during their employment via the NEG Grant, and left more prepared for future employment as a skilled labor force. 

It is also worth mentioning that during the three months the grant program was active, there were no injuries reported during this period. Pete Nichols who provided mapping and logistical support during the Grant Administration noted; "In light of the kind of labor intensive work this involved while using chain saws and related equipment for tree and brush removal, the fact that there were no injuries during the project was a great accomplishment." He



went on to say; "This safety record is a reflection of our employee's dedication to safety consciousness due to proper training and technique".

The SWCD is continuing to accept applications for debris removal in the event a grant such as this ever presents itself in the future.

"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I... I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference." Robert Frost

Agricultural Assessments

Landowners filing for an agricultural assessment in 2013 must file applications with their local town assessor by March 1st. The agricultural assessment provides for partial tax relief for land being actively being farmed. To complete an application for an agricultural assessment exemption, landowners must have a Soil Group Worksheet prepared by the Soil and Water Conservation District for each tax parcel they intend to enroll.



Landowners who have previously had a soil group worksheet completed for a tax parcel do not need a new one unless the total parcel acreage has changed or there is a change in land use. However, landowners must apply each year with their assessor to remain eligible for the agricultural assessment. Call the District office at 518-295-8811 to set up an appointment by February 15th, have the tax map number, location, acreage and the current land uses for each parcel available. If you have any questions about the program give us a call.

Tree Order Form Enclosed



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